

# Goldmine

## Presents...

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# YESTERDAY'S MEMORIES

"dedicated to the history of R&B music"

Vol. 4 No. 1

Issue 13 \$2.50

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## We Three...

One more, once!

What do you do when there is nothing to do? What do you do when the withdrawal symptoms set in (any of you tried to stop smoking lately)? What do you do when you tell yourself you don't have time for this stuff anymore and you find there's no one listening? What do you do when you get some new leads? What do you do when your successors don't live up to your standards - or any? What do you do? - You say "All right, just one more interview; just one more story; just one more magazine."

All these months we've been receiving such wonderful compliments, that it's hard to let go. You've missed the magazine and, frankly, so have we.

So we compromised, one more issue. Does this mean **YM** is back? Sadly, no. We made the decision to stop publishing because other demands on our time were so great that we couldn't honestly say

that we could adhere to our quarterly schedule. Now, if anything, those demands are greater. Will there be another **YM** after this? Who knows? If so, it won't be out soon, or on any kind of fixed schedule. If so, it will be because you provided us with leads to more groups. (Note that the P.O. Box is still open - write when you can).

Enough (sob!) sentimentality. In this issue we're "Goin' to Chicago," largely as a result of the efforts of Bob Pruter. Except for the really supergroups - Flamingos, Moonglows, Dells - the Chicago scene has been relatively untouched. We've taken some steps to change that.

Also included (for those allergic to Windy Cities) are The Pipes, The Sandmen, and one of the finest 'kid-sound' groups, The Chanters.

As usual, we've got to thank Ferdie Gonzalez, whose research in the discographical field is unmatched in the history of R&B. It's inconceivable that any serious collector hasn't picked up a copy of the Disco-File yet.

It's a great issue (with all due modesty); we're sure you'll enjoy it. Or have enjoyed it (for those of you who read editorials last). As always, it's been fun. Maybe we'll do it again sometime.

# The Magnificents

by Rick Whitesell, based on an interview with Johnny Keyes  
by Marv Goldberg

Long a center of intense and progressive music activity, Chicago has always been a city where new trends are picked up quickly and given a distinct 'Windy City' flavor. As early as 1953, the first chords of the new rhythm and blues invasion reverberated through the halls and bathrooms of Hyde Park High, a school with a predominantly white student body.

One of the first vocal groups to sing R&B at the school consisted of Johnny Keyes (1st tenor); Thurman 'Ray' Ramsey (tenor); Fred Rakestraw (tenor); and Willie Myles (bass). The members of this quartet admired and emulated such groups as The Five Royales, El Dorados and Harptones. At their practice sessions, they worked on SUNDAY KIND OF LOVE, MEMORIES OF YOU, MY LOVIN' BABY, The Moonglows' MOST OF ALL, The Penguins' HEY SENORITA as well as selections by two other Chicago based groups - The Danderliers and Moroccos.

Clothes were as important to an aspiring group's success as the sound, though, and this aspiring foursome chose "tam-o-shanters" as their trademark and the source of a name - The Tams. To the Tams, tam-o-shanters had little significance aside from being a cheap but distinctive uniform. The group's first exposure to public performing came when they sang at high school variety shows.

Just prior to graduation, The Tams sang SUNDAY KIND OF LOVE and HEY SENORITA at one of these shows. In the audience that day was a disc jockey from WAAF-Chicago, who unpretentiously called himself "The Magnificent Montague". After Montague had started playing R&B on his morning "drive-time" show, with devastating effects on the ratings of his pop-oriented opposition, he had become Chicago's leading morning man. Montague also became used to having his way in the Chicago music business.

Thus, when the DJ heard and liked the Tams' style, it meant something.

In short, the Magnificent Montague became the manager of the group, changed their name to the "Magnificents" (after himself), and without so much as an audition for the record company, brought them to Vee-Jay to begin a recording career. Montague also had a hand in writing the group's first and last hit, UP ON THE MOUNTAIN.

UP ON THE MOUNTAIN started life as the bass part of a street song called NEW-BORN SQUARE. The group put some words to the melody, and then Montague rewrote the song until it had become a 7 minute opus which had a gospel feel but made little sense. Vee-Jay A&R man Calvin Carter came into the picture at this point deleting the confusing segments and leaving The Magnificents with enough words and music to make a hit record. Throughout the early months of 1956, UP ON THE MOUNTAIN garnered enough airplay to become an instant smash. Sparked by Johnny Keyes' mellifluous lead vocal and Willie Myles' expressive bass part, the song is still a fondly-remembered rock and roll classic.

Of course, The Magnificents' wardrobe kept pace with their new



The Magnificents (later 1956): Top: Johnny Keyes, Fred Rakestraw. Bottom: L. C. Cooke, Barbara Arrington, Willie Myles.

success. In the accompanying photo, the group is wearing what Dee Clark has described as "their tree-trunk coats".

For some unknown reason, The Magnificent Montague felt more 'class' had to be added to the group, and he added a girl named Barbara Arrington to the personnel roster. At the same time, Thurman Ramsey was replaced by L. C. Cooke (Sam's brother), and The Magnificents then had their second and final Vee-Jay session. HICCUP and CADDY BO both featured Barbara as lead, and according to Johnny Keyes, this left Magnificents' fans with no sense of continuity of sound. Had OFF THE MOUNTAIN been released after UP ON THE MOUNTAIN, Keyes theorizes, The Magnificents might have had a chance to establish themselves.

When their second disc made a quick descent into the bargain bins, The Magnificents left Montague and Vee-Jay. The three remaining Magnificents' songs on Vee-Jay, OZETA, DON'T LEAVE ME and LET'S DO THE CHA-CHA - were **not** by The Magnificents at all. This deception was Montague's doing, but even Calvin Carter is no longer certain of the identity of the ersatz Magnificent's group. Possibly, the group that sang these sides was The Prodigals.

Continuing on, this time under Ewart Abner's management, Keyes and Fred Rakestraw formed a new Magnificents 'road' unit with Reggie Gordon (tenor), and Rufus Hunter (bass). This group settled in Philadelphia for a while; as Johnny Keyes recalls, "When there was no more money and no more gigs, then we practiced and got good!" The spectre of poverty looms larger than the joys of artistic achievement, though, and consequently, Gordon and Hunter



Sam Cooke Tour (with Thurston Harris, early 1958): Top: James Scruggs, Johnny Keyes, Carnation Charlie Hughes (Drifters), Gerhart Thrasher (Drifters); Middle: Fred Rakestraw, Rev. Edwards (Silhouettes); Bottom: Richard Blandon (Dubs).



The Magnificents (1956): Thurman Ramsey, Fred Rakestraw, Johnny Keyes, Willie Myles.



quickly accepted respective offers to join the more-successful Rays and Cameos. Keyes and Rakestraw (along with James 'Scrooge' Scruggs) then teamed up with Thurston Harris. The LITTLE BITTY PRETTY ONE hit maker had once thought it would always be easy to find a back-up group on the road but was learning otherwise; the two ex-Magnificents worked with Harris long enough to sing on his record of I'M OUT TO GETCHA backed with BE BABA LEBA (Aladdin 3415).

In ensuing years, Keyes and other members of The Magnificents did back-up work and other miscellaneous studio recordings; in fact, as a group, The Magnificents had backed up Danny Cobbs on an unreleased Vee-Jay master entitled I PRAY FOR YOUR LOVE. This Otis Blackwell tune had been given to virtually all Vee-Jay artists to record, but none of the resulting interpretations were deemed of high enough quality to warrant release.

Listening to UP ON THE MOUNTAIN today, one might find it difficult to explain why a group of vocalists as talented as The Magnificents did not continue to build upon the success of their first release with other hits; Calvin Carter later stated that it was 'unlucky' for a group to score a hit with its very first record. In this case, regrettably, he was right.

#### MAGNIFICENTS DISCOGRAPHY

##### VEE-JAY

183	Up On The Mountain (JK)/Why Did She Go (TR)	1956
208	Caddy Bo (BA)/Hiccup (BA)	1956
235	Off The Mountain (JK)/Lost Lover (JK)	1956
281	Ozeta (By a different group)/Don't Leave Me (diff. grp.)	1958
367	Let's Do The Cha Cha (different group)	
	Up On The Mountain (re-release of original - JK)	1960

##### KANSOMA

03	The Dribble Twist/Do You Mind (both diff. group)	1962
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##### CHECKER

1016	(Reissue of Kansoma 03)	1962
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##### LEADS:

JK - Johnny Keyes; TR - Thurman Ramsey; BA - Barbara Arrington

In 1963, the roots of a new Magnificents' group was formed. Clarence Jasper, James Pleasant, Jan Bradley and a second girl, sang as the Passions in 1965. Jasper, Pleasant and former Magnificent Thurman 'Ray' Ramsey became The Emeralds and signed with Gerhard-Vick Records. In 1967, Richard Dixon (a former member of The Dukays) joined and the group's name was again changed - this time to The Magnificents. This group did local Chicago appearances and some TV shows, but didn't record as far as it is known.

## JOHNNY KEYES' POST-MAGNIFICENTS' CAREER

Although The Magnificents had disbanded, Johnny Keyes continued his involvement with the music. Two of the L.C. Cooke records on Checker were to have been credited to "L.C. Cooke and The Magnificents", in fact, but the group's name was dropped from the label copy just prior to release. On these sides, the group consisted of L. C. Cooke, Johnny Keyes, Reggie Gordon and Fred Rakestraw.

##### CHECKER

903	Do You Remember/Blue Tears	9-58
925	Please Think Of Me/I'm Falling	

Also, in 1958, a United Artists session brought Keyes and Gordon together when Glen 'Bubble' Phillips, tenor from Chicago's Five Frenchmen, and Chuck Barksdale, the Dells' bass. I HAD A GIRL and I NEVER SEEM TO PLEASE YOU, had they been released, were to have been billed as "Reggie Cooke and The Magnificents".

An interesting release was Mercury 71397. One side, by the "John Key Singers" was entitled "TUSCUMSCARI (WITH APOLOGIES TO TUCUMCARI, NEW MEXICO.)" It also featured The Magnificent Montague on narration and several gospel singers in the back-up chorus. The flip side, LOST TEENAGER, was credited to "Johnny and The Keys". The personnel of this unit included Keyes, Gordon, Phillips, former El Dorados' lead, Pirkle Lee Moses, and lead vocalist, Jerome Brown.

Then, at various times and in various combinations, Keyes, L.C. Cooke, Reggie Gordon, Rufus Hunter, and Jerome Browne, backed up guitarist Bo Diddley. Three of these recordings were:

##### CHECKER:

914	I'm Sorry	2-59
942	Road Runner	
951	Walkin' and Talkin'	



The Magnificents (1971): Top: Richard Dixon; Bottom: Clarence Jasper, Thurman Ramsey, James Pleasant. (Photo courtesy of Richard Dixon).

As a duet, Johnny Keyes and Reggie Gordon recorded as The Shell Brothers:

##### END

1050	Shooma Dom Dom/Whispering Winds	1959
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Also in 1959, Keyes and Gordon joined two brothers - Jimmy and Julius "Skeeter" Hawkins - to sing harmony behind Beverly Ann Gibson on some King sides:

##### KING

5244	Call On Me	7-59
5288	Wait And See	12-59
5315	The Love We Shared	1960

The group did not sing on the flip sides of these records. Note that Jimmy Hawkins had been in The 4 Buddies on Club 51.

An odd side was SOFT FEELIN' on the Odessa label. Keyes, Gordon and Brown sang behind Jimmy Russell's lead vocal. The session producers weren't happy with Russell's effort, though, and brought in veteran sax man Red Holloway to record over the vocal track. Although the label credits Russell, he isn't even heard on the side.

There were two releases on Destination around 1964. Keyes, Gordon, the Hawkins Brothers, and some gospel singers (including Major Lance's sister, Bessie) sang behind L.C. Cooke on DO YOU WANT TO DANCE. Then there was this release by "John and the Keys", which featured Montague on narration with singing by Keyes, Gordon, the Hawkins Brothers, and an unremembered lead singer:

##### DESTINATION

602	Take All Of Me/Keep On Trustin'	1964
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Around 1967, Keyes produced and wrote songs for two releases by "L.H. And The Memphis Sounds". Keyes sang with L. H. White (lead); Wallace Liggins (tenor) and Robert Hunter (bass). These two releases appeared on the Nashville-based Hollywood label:

##### HOLLYWOOD

I Never Seem To Please You
Out Of Control
Double Up
House Full Of Rooms

Johnny Keyes was also on some Nashville instrumentals; an example was STONE FOX backed with DIG IN by the Pac-Keys; also on Hollywood. Here, Keyes provided percussion with his efforts on congas and gourd.

Finally, after this extensive career as a studio musician and vocalist, Johnny got to record solo for the Stax subsidiary, Fretone:

##### FRETONE

A Scared Man Can't Gamble And A Jealous Man Can't Work What's Your Sign
---

From 1968 to 1970, Johnny was Isaac Hayes' road manager and in 1970 his composition of TOO WEAK TO FIGHT won a gold record for Clarence Carter.

Presently, Johnny Keyes is a representative for Vee-Jay in Chicago. Newly reactivated, Vee-Jay International Records is based in Los Angeles, and the re-issue program includes a Magnificents' LP which includes unissued material as well as UP ON THE MOUNTAIN.

# The El Dorados

by Dave Hinckley, Based on an interview with Pirkle Lee Moses Jr.  
by Marv Goldberg

Most rhythm and blues groups of the 1950s had something in common; little or no luck. By comparison to most of the fellow singers, the El Dorados were moderately lucky.

They formed in late 1952, when an Air Force man named Pirkle Lee Moses Jr. began spending some of his spare time in the halls of Chicago's Englewood High School, harmonizing with four students there. They were Louis Bradley (tenor), Jewel Jones (second tenor and baritone), James Maddox (baritone and bass) and Robert Glasper (bass). Moses sang lead, and they called themselves the Five Stars.

Within a year Glasper left, and two new members were added: Arthur Basset (tenor) and Richard Nickens (baritone and bass). At this time they changed the group name to Pirkle Lee and the 5 Stars. Pirkle Lee, somewhat older than the others, was clearly the leader.

When Pirkle Lee got out of the Air Force in 1954, they considered changing their name to the Cardinals, but they chose instead a reference to the Cadillac El Dorado, then the new automotive rage.

Seeking a recording contract, they tried to develop a style of their own while practicing songs of the Orioles, Dominoes, Clovers, Mills Brothers and Ink Spots. They would often change arrangements to fit their own voices.

Their luck began when Chicago disc jockey Vivan Carter decided she wanted more groups on her Vee Jay label. She rented a local skating rink and invited groups to challenge the Spaniels, her star attraction. The El Dorados entered and won, and that's how they got into show business.

From then on, Vee Jay was a dominant force in the group's career. They didn't always agree with what Vivan Carter and company did, but it did give them some success.

Their first record was **My Loving Baby** with Pirkle Lee singing lead, backed with **Baby I Need You**, featuring Arthur Basset.

That was a moderate seller, but it hadn't been out for long when Hank Ballard's Midnighters hit with **Annie Had A Baby**, and all other record companies began scrambling for ways to cash in on that.

Vee Jay picked the El Dorados and told them to find a girl who could sing **Annie's Answer** with them. They auditioned all of Vee Jay's female singers and finally picked Hazel McCollum, who belonged to a group Vee Jay had under contract.

Vee Jay was in such a hurry to get the record out that it didn't even wait for the group to record a flip side. Speed didn't pay big dividends, however; other answer and spin-off records sold better than **Annie's Answer**, as did most of the subsequent Annie series the Midnighters recorded.

In any case, that session also produced **One More Chance** and **Little Miss Love**, the former of which is a beautiful song which didn't sell and is quite rare today.

After the session, Arthur Basset left to complete his education. There was no replacement for him. Then the group got lucky again.

Their next session, in 1955, produced their monster **At My Front Door**, which made it to Number 2 on Billboard's charts - but more importantly, ensured them a steady stream of bookings for years.

Ironically, when **At My Front Door** was released the El Dorados were experimenting with modern harmony, which Vee Jay did not appreciate. It was at Vee Jay's insistence that they recorded **What's Buggin' You Baby** - which someone had heard them perform - to be paired with **At My Front Door**.

**What's Buggin' You Baby** had a Navy flavor mixed with jive talk ("Why don't you raise a storm / And get your brew in a stew"). The El Dorados rarely performed it.

Later in 1955, **I'll Be Forever Loving You** was released, and this too was a hit, although not quite as big. It had originally been recorded by the 5 Knights of Rhythm / Rip Chords, but Vee Jay didn't like their version and thought the El Dorados could handle it better.

As it turned out, Vee Jay was right.

By the time **Rock and Roll's For Me** was recorded, Richard Nickens had left, so the next four releases only had four voices. There have been rumors that Robert Bitts sang on a couple of these, but if he did he kept a very low profile: Pirkle Lee never heard of him.

About a year after **At My Front Door**, Vee Jay requested, recorded and released a humorous sequel: **Bim Bam Boom**. Although musically it is comparable to **At My Front Door**, it didn't sell.

By 1957, there was friction among Pirkle Lee, the rest of the group, and Vee Jay. This was resolved by Jewel Jones, Louis Bradley and James Maddox getting themselves a new lead singer, Marvin



The El Dorados (1954): Top: Jewel Jones, Pirkle Lee Moses, Richard Nickens, Arthur Basset, James Maddox.





The El Dorados (1955): Top: Louis Bradley, James Maddox, Jewel Jones, Richard Nickens. Bottom: Pirkle Lee Moses.

Smith, and jumping to the Academy label, where they recorded and released *A Lonely Boy*.

Where they went from there is unclear, since they didn't keep in much contact after they left Pirkle Lee and Vee Jay. There are rumors the Tempos' recording of *Promise Me* was done by the El Dorados when they were stranded in California and needed money, to get home to Chicago.

Pirkle Lee confirmed they were in California, but didn't know why or where.

Meanwhile, back at Vee Jay, Pirkle Lee was a lead without a group. It happened, however, that Dee Clark had just left the Kool Gents/Delegates, at Vee Jay's urging, to record as a single. That left a group without a lead. So Vee Jay, quite logically, matched them: Pirkle Lee with John McCall (tenor), Douglas Brown (second tenor), Teddy Long (second tenor and baritone), and John Carter (bass). They recorded a number of songs the Kool Gents/Delegates had been practicing, and these were issued as the last four El Dorados' sides.

Logic didn't sell records, however, and the match dissolved soon. Pirkle Lee went on the road with a succession of back-up singers called the El Dorados.

The group was then dormant for a decade, until in 1969 one record surfaced. That was Pirkle Lee joining Melvin Morrow (tenor) and George Prayer (Kemp), both formerly of the Moroccos, for *God Bless The Day / In Over My Head* on the Al Smith label.



The El Dorados/Kool Gents (1958): John McCall, John Carter, Teddy Long, Douglas Brown.

### THE EL DORADOS

#### VEE JAY

115	My Loving Baby (PLM)/Baby I Need You (AB)	9-54
118	Annie's Answer (HM)/Living With Vivian - Al Smith's Combo	1954
127	One More Chance (PLM)/Little Miss Love (PLM)	1954
147	At My Front Door (PLM)/What's Buggin' You Baby (LB)	9-55
165	I'll Be Forever Loving You (PLM)/I Began to Realize (PLM)	1955
180	Now That You've Gone (PLM)/Rock 'N Roll's For Me (PLM)	1956
197	A Fallen Tear (all)/Chop Ling Soon (PLM)	1956
211	There In The Night (PLM)/Bim Bam Boom (PLM)	10-56
250	Tears On My Pillow (PLM)/A Rose For My Darling (PLM)	1957
263	3 Reasons Why (PLM)/Boom Diddle Boom (PLM)	1958
302	Lights Are Low (PLM)/Oh What A Girl (PLM)	1958

#### LEADS:

PLM - Pirkle Lee Moses Jr.; AB - Arthur Basset; HM - Hazel McCallum; LB - Louis Bradley.

#### ACADEMY (Four Eldorados):

8138	A Lonely Boy (MS)/Go Little Susie (Leads, Marvin Smith)	1958
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#### RHYTHM (Tempos - possibly the 4 Eldorados):

121	Promise Me (—)/Never Let Me Go (—)	1958
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#### AL SMITH

	God Bless The Day (PLM)/In Over My Head (PLM)	c.1969
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# The Rip-Chords

Based on an interview with Leon Arnold - By Marv Goldberg

The Rip-Chords started out as The 5 Knights of Rhythm. They were: Leon Arnold (lead), John Gillespie (alto), George Vinyard (1st tenor), David Hargrove (2nd tenor) and Lester Martin (bass). At the time Leon joined, the group had been in existence for a while. In 1956 they changed the group name to The Rip-Chords.

They admired The Flamingos and Moonglows, but could imitate most of the popular groups of the day. In spite of this, their repertoire consisted mostly of original material. (Leon had, in fact, written "I'll Be Forever Loving You", which wound up being recorded by The El Dorados.)

When they thought they were ready, they auditioned for Eli Toscano, owner of Abco Records (soon to become Cobra). The record didn't take off and the group broke up soon after. This is blamed on poor management.

Most of The Rip-Chords' appearances were at dances and clubs in the Chicago area; a few were made outside Chicago.

After The Rip-Chords' demise, Leon joined The Calvanes as a fill-in member (he wasn't on any of the recordings). He then did one record for Bunky Sheppard's Wes label - "But (Goodbye)"/"Here's To The Girl".

### THE RIP-CHORDS

#### ABCO

105	I Love You The Most (Lead: Leon Arnold)	6-56
	Let's Do The Razzle Dazzle (Lead: Lester Martin)	



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is just another reason why **GOLDMINE**  
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# The Five Echoes

By Robert Pruter,  
Based on an interview with Earl Lewis

Chicago is the blues capital of the world, and for decades its mean, bleak ghetto streets have spawned a host of urban bluesmen - Muddy Waters, Eddie Boyd, Little Walter, Otis Rush - the list is endless. It's not surprising, then, that the blues has made its presence felt in the city's other black musical forms, such as the vocal harmony ensembles. Among the many Chicago groups inspired by the blues tradition The Five Echoes get perhaps the most frequent mention. Their work on Art Sheridan's Sabre label ranks among the bluesiest ever recorded in the city.

The Five Echoes originally consisted of four kids from the city's South Side in the vicinity of 35th to 39th Streets. They were Count Sims, Herbert Lewis, Jimmy Marshall, and Tommy Hunt (the same Tommy Hunt who years later was with The Flamingos and then scored with HUMAN). The group's hangout was the Flame. From it, the group took its original name, The Flames. The Morocco Hotel likewise served as the name for Sollie McElroy's Moroccans.

Around 1952, The Flamingos, who were also staying at the hotel, expelled their original lead singer, Earl Lewis. Lewis, who loved to sing, was looking for a new group and The Flames gladly incorporated him into the group. Another less than official member was Freddie Matthews, who served as chauffeur and who also occasionally sang with the group. Not long afterwards, the group changed its name to The Five Echoes after they had discovered a previous claim on The Flames' name.

Earl Lewis tells of how the group got the opportunity to record: "We ran into Walter Spriggs. He had heard about The Echoes, so he had come down to 39th Street, where we hung out, and we would be like sitting around the street corner singing all the time. So he came by and said how would you guys like to go out on the road. 'What we are going to do first is work a club for a time,' said Spriggs, 'so I can groom you guys like I want.' There's a place up in Kenosha, Wisconsin, called the Right Spot owned by two Italian guys. Spriggs took us up there one weekend, and when we did this job there that night, they had a nice crowd, which was the way Spriggs figured it. We did a good show for them that night and the crowd liked us. These two Italian guys told us to stay, and we stayed there about a year."

"We did Orioles' songs, Dominoes' songs, everything. Then we started getting our material together. Walter Spriggs was knocking it around, writing songs. He wrote a couple, LONELY MOOD and BABY COME BACK TO ME. So when Ewart Abner (we called him Little Abner) of Chance Records came out there, by that time we were swinging. We had the house packed every weekend. Abner asked us to record and that's how we started recording."

The first record LONELY MOOD b/w BABY COME BACK TO ME was released on Chance's Sabre subsidiary in 1953. Spriggs sang lead on both sides, but was considered a member of the group only for the session; Sims sang baritone, Herbert Lewis, baritone; Hunt, second tenor, Earl Lewis, first tenor; and Marshall, bass. Both sides got radio play in various cities across the nation, but the record could not be called a big seller. It got the group known, so when they were billed, their name was enough to strike a chord of recognition.

After the record, Hunt was lost to the group. He had been drafted, and The Five Echoes were left short a member, leaving Sims, the two Lewis's, and Marshall. The group recruited Johnnie Taylor, a Kansas City native who was bumming around Chicago singing in a local gospel group, The Highway Q.C.'s. This is the same Taylor who became the hit-making phenomenon of the Sixties and Seventies. Given the fact that he forsook gospel for a blues group and sang X-rated songs in the Seventies, some might question whether Taylor was the right type to be in gospel. But according to Lewis, Taylor was far from an apostate: "Johnnie was the type of guy who was stone religious," he said firmly. "He was a gospel singer, he was really a gospel singer," Lewis repeated for emphasis; "he just moseyed off into Rhythm and Blues."

With Taylor as a member, The Five Echoes' next record was SO LONESOME b/w BROKE, released on Sabre in 1954. SO LONESOME featured the following personnel - Sims (lead), Taylor (second lead), E. Lewis (first tenor), H. Lewis (baritone), and Marshall (bass). BROKE had the same personnel but with Sims singing the only lead.

The Five Echoes had one more session with Sabre. The company seemingly was trying to get the group away from blues and so they

had the group record a ballad, WHY OH WHY and an R&B jump tune, THAT'S MY BABY. The personnel on these numbers were Sims (lead), Taylor, E. Lewis, H. Lewis, Marshall, and Hunt who was recording while AWOL. He sang the second lead on WHY OH WHY. Hunt was soon lost to the group again after the FBI caught up with him and sent him to the stockade. Chance/Sabre was apparently in financial difficulty at the time because it folded before the year 1954 was out. This may account for the fact why the songs from this session went unreleased. (They did, however, appear on a Constellation album in 1963.)

Vee-Jay took up The Echoes' contract and recorded four more sides by the group during 1954. The members on this session were Sims, E. Lewis, Marshall, Taylor and Freddie Matthews. (H. Lewis was gradually withdrawing from the group, so his place at the session was given to Matthews, who assumed a more permanent position.)

TELL ME BABY b/w I REALLY DO, released in 1954, continued the bluesy type sound the group had established on Sabre. A year later, Vee Jay released FOOL'S PRAYER b/w TASTEE FREEZE. The latter number was a novelty song the whole group put together from the experience of hanging around the local Tastee Freeze. The two records, unfortunately, did nothing for the company or the group. These were the last records The Five Echoes would make. (Lewis never heard of SOLDIER BOY on Vee Jay or I'M NOT YOUR FOOL ANYMORE on Blue Lake, or any other reputed Five Echoes records.)



The Five Echoes (1954): Johnnie Taylor, Earl Lewis, Count Sims, Jimmy Marshall, Freddie Matthews. (Photo courtesy of Vee Jay International).

The end of the group's recording career did not end the career of the Five Echoes. The existence of the group seemed almost irrelevant to records. Sims, Hunt (who returned to The Five Echoes shortly after the Vee Jay session), E. Lewis, Marshall, Matthews, and sometimes H. Lewis continued to tour clubs for many years after their last session. Taylor toured with the group for a spell before rejoining the gospel circuit, but Hunt stayed until 1956, when he joined The Flamingos.

Live, The Five Echoes bore little relation to the recording group with respect to their sound and songs. "Our shows were not like blues all the time," related Lewis, "Like when we were doing gigs we would just throw in a blues, here and there. We would just mix it all up. We didn't cater to any group. We sang standards like BLUE MOON, BEWILDERED, and I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU. We were not what you would call a bluesy group. That was just the way we recorded records."

Over the years, The Five Echoes toured in just about every large city and dink town in the midwest. When Shaw booking dropped them because of their lack of recording activity, members of the group continued to book themselves for several years. Finally, by the end of the decade, the group broke up.

The members of the group dropped out of the music business to take up day jobs. Earl Lewis now lives in a comfortable home in Chicago's western suburbs and Herbert Lewis resides in the city, but Jimmy Marshall died in 1973, as did Count Sims a year or so later. No one knows where Freddie Matthews went. What happened to Tommy Hunt and Johnnie Taylor after their Echoes' career is too well known to give an accounting here.



## FIVE ECHOES DISCOGRAPHY

SABRE (as FIVE ECHOES)	Released:
102 Lonely Mood (U5049)	1953
Baby Come Back To Me (U5048)	
105 So Lonesome (C5102)	1954
Broke (C5103)	
That's My Baby (5116)	
Why Oh Why (5117)	

## VEE JAY (as FIVE ECHOS)

129 Tell Me Baby (203)	1954
I Really Do (204)	
156 Fools Prayer (206)	1955
Tastee Freeze (207)	

## The Other 4 Buddies

by Dave Hinckley, Based on an interview with Dickie Umbra  
by Marv Goldberg

They tried as hard as they could to avoid the long shadow of the 4 Buddies, who were so successful on Savoy Records. In the end, it didn't work. Maybe in a sense they were swallowed by it.

It was a typical story, starting around 1950 in Chicago's Ivy Wells housing projects: a bunch of guys got together to sing rhythm and blues harmony.

Originally they were Ularsee Manor (lead), Jimmy Hawkins (tenor), Jimmy's cousin Sam Hawkins (tenor), and Willie Bryant (bass/baritone). In 1951 they added baritone/bass Dickie Umbra as a fifth member, and from time to time they had two other tenor voices; Donald Ventor and Irving Hunter.

They liked the name Buddies, so that's what they called themselves. They deliberately avoided the 4 Buddies tag, though, because of the Savoy group. This also worked out well from another angle: although they were most frequently a quartet, their members tended to drift in and out, so they sometimes sang as a trio or a quintet.

For better or for worse, however, they have come down to us as the 4 Buddies - because of one of those record company errors no one will probably ever explain.

Actually, they have come down to us as the **other** 4 Buddies, because despite their undisputed vocal talents, they never had the impact of the Savoy group.

The Buddies began with material from other groups: the Clovers, Drifters, 4 Jacks. They practiced such songs almost exclusively, and for the first few years they did talent shows and local cabarets. When they wanted a change of pace, they sang in churches as the Mount Moriah Five (no danger of that being confused with any other well-known group).

Around 1953, they met DJ McKee Fitzhugh of Chicago station WOPA. Fitzhugh broadcast from a store window, and the group dropped by one day for an audition. They made a fair impression, apparently, as he asked them to sing live on several subsequent shows.

Through Fitzhugh they met Jimmy Davis, a Chicago record promoter and owner of the Savoy Skating Rink plus a record store. Davis had no label of his own at the time, but he was thinking of starting one. In any case, he became the Buddies' manager after having Fitzhugh broadcast an appeal for them to contact him.

Davis kept the group busy; for the next three years they played Davis-promoted shows and kept in daily practice. At last, in 1956, Davis started his label: Club 51.

They should have had an early foreshadowing of trouble, however, with the very naming of the label. Davis originally called it Savoy 51, after his skating rink and the year the rink was opened.

After the trouble to which the group had gone to keep themselves distinct from Savoy's 4 Buddies, it would have been ironic indeed if they had been recording for a label with Savoy in the name.

Davis apparently feared trouble from Savoy, however, so he switched to Club 51. It was a good thing, as it turned out, because on all three of the records the Buddies did for him, his labels read 4 Buddies. Such action might indeed have raised the ire of Savoy.

Regardless of their name, the Buddies did not find Club 51 the big break they had hoped for. Primarily it was a promotion problem: Davis had neither the money nor the out-of-town contacts to give his records good exposure. None of his releases did well, and the label was gone within two years.

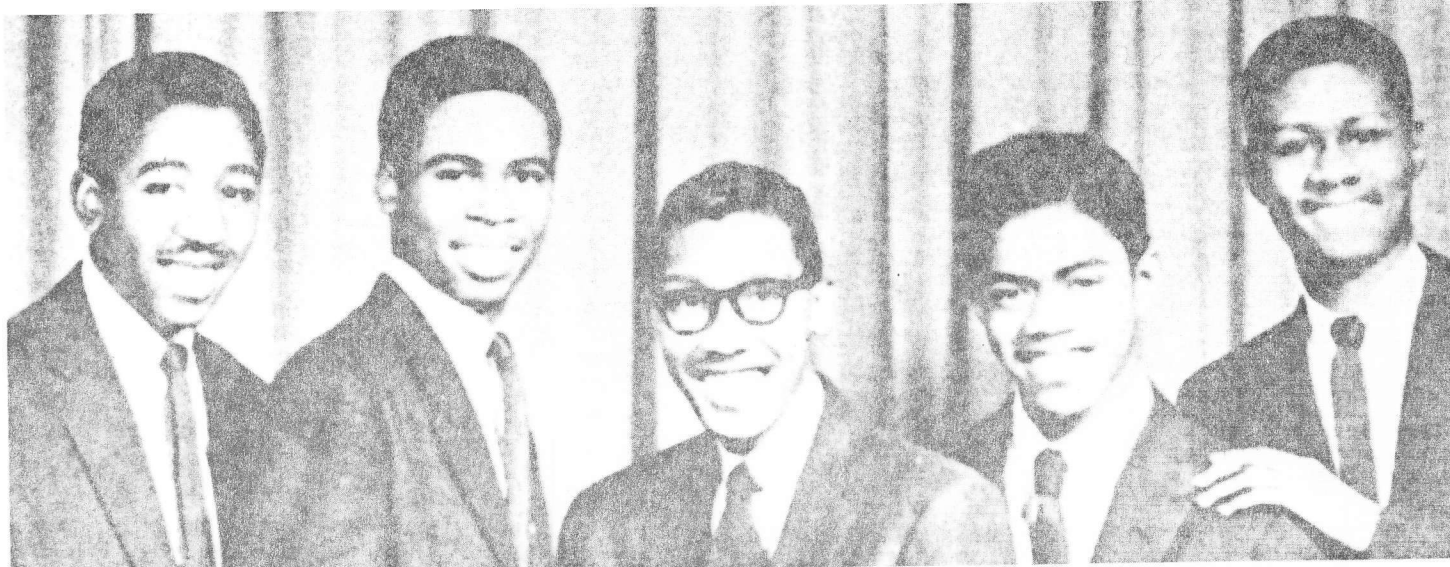
The Buddies' first sides were as backup singers: **You Mean Everything To Me** behind Chicago bluesmen Rudy Greene and I **Need You So** behind Bobbie James. Miss James was primarily a church singer, but she fronted for vocal groups on occasion.

Their only solo effort was Club 51 105, and it consisted of two songs they had written themselves. **Delores** was Dickie Umbra's girlfriend at the time and this was his bid to immortalize her.

They practiced out her songs for Davis, including **Nightfall** with Prince Cooper, but that was never recorded.

Lack of success, for the Buddies as for so many other groups, eventually led to disillusionment, disinterest and a breakup.

Sam Hawkins had left before the Club 51 sides were recorded, but he did continue in the music business. So did his cousin Jimmy. They were the only ones. After waiting six years to get on record,



The 4 Buddies (1956): William Bryant, Irving Hunter, Jimmy Hawkins, Dickie Umbra, Ularsee Manor.

they did. And within a year they were gone.

## 4 BUDDIES DISCOGRAPHY

### CLUB 51

- 103 You Mean Everything to Me (Rudy Greene & I (Highway No. 1 - Rudy Greene) 1956  
 104 I Need You So (Bobbie James & I (Baby I'm Tired - Bobbie James) 1956  
 105 Delores (UM/JH)/Look Out (UM) 1956

### LEADS

UM - Ularsee Manor; JH - Jimmy Hawkins



The Pastels (Ca. 1955): Jerry Mills, Robert Randolph, Norman Palm, Charles McKnight.

Although most of their work came from a grueling schedule of one-night stands, the Pastels worked full-time as singers.

When the time came to draw up a new contract with United, label owner Leonard Allen introduced the Pastels to Julius Collins. "He (Allen) talked to everyone and said he wanted Collins to be the new lead," said Palm. "We grumbled and we griped. Fred Buckley said he would not be a barrier to the future success of the group and voluntarily stepped aside and took himself out of the group."

As it turned out, the group never recorded again anyway. Miss Lee's husband didn't like the idea of his wife being in the company of five other men, and he had her retire from managing for good. Since Allen had been dealing with the Pastels through Miss Lee, Miss Lee's exit ended the group's recording career.

With Julius Collins as lead, though, the group continued on for about two more years. According to Norman Palm, some of the members of the group got inflated ideas of their own importance, and ensuing arguments brought about the Pastels' demise around 1958.

At this point, Norman Palm joined the Crystals, who recorded "Ring A Ring A Doo" and "Left Front Row" for Delano. He recalls the other members as having been: Lara Rodriguez, lead; Eddie Cherry, second tenor; Louis Young, bass; and a baritone remembered only as Herbert.

## THE PASTELS

### UNITED

- 196 Put Your Arms Around Me (1567)  
 196 Boom De De Boom (1566)  
 Recorded 11-23-55  
 Unreleased: Bye Bye (1562); Goodbye (1563)  
 Recorded 10-19-55

All leads by Fred Buckley

## The Capitols

By Dave Hinckley, Based on an interview with Kurtis Scott by Marv Goldberg

As noted in *Yesterday's Memories No. 5*, it's really impossible to write about one group from Brooklyn's Fort Green projects without writing about several. In that issue, The Mints, Young Lads, Deltars, Chips, Pharoahs, and Chesters were considered. Now add The Capitols to that list.

The Capitols started as The Charmers (a common name - witness the Central and Timely groups) in 1955. Bass Kurtis Scott, then 13, helped assemble the group at school with Nathaniel 'Butch' Epps (lead), Jose Harris (first tenor), and Kurtis' brother Kenny (baritone). They were organized enough to play local dances and even recorded two songs at the Polk Studios in Brooklyn (LETTER OF LOVE/DID YOU RECEIVE THE LETTER - label unknown).

However, they were not organized enough to push for a career and within two years, Kenny and Jose had drifted away. So in 1957 Kurtis and Butch began hanging out in the CBS building at 1697 Broadway. There they met the rest of the group that was to become The Capitols: Billy Hall (first tenor), Eddie Jacobs (second tenor), and Clarence Collins (baritone).

They got Richard Barrett to be their manager, but in spite of his

## Fred Buckley and....

# The Pastels

by Marv Goldberg and Rick Whitesell, Based on an interview with Norman Palm, conducted by Marv Goldberg. Special thanks to Robert Pruter.

Everybody with an ear for the best group harmony of the '50s is familiar with the Pastels, who recorded "Been So Long" and enjoyed some success as a result.

Everybody with an addiction to the classic group harmony of the '50s is familiar with the Pastels, who recorded a mellifluous ballad entitled "Put Your Arms Around Me" for the United label.

In this story, *Yesterday's Memories* will cater to the addicts out there once again, and cover the latter and originally formed of the two Pastels' groups.

Around 1954, Fred Buckley led a unit which he organized in his home town of Chicago. Charles McKnight was baritone, Verne Alliston sang second tenor, a barely remembered baritone named 'Mac', and a totally unremembered first tenor rounded out this original aggregation.

A year later, Buckley reorganized the Pastels. The resulting unit was the group that recorded for United: Buckley was lead; Norman Palm, who had met Fred Buckley when they were serving in the National Guard, sang first tenor with the new Pastels, and had been in a neighboring group called the Sparrows before; Charles McKnight sang baritone; Robert Randolph was second tenor; and Charles Williams rounded out the roster as the group's bass. In some live appearances, Williams was replaced by Jerry Mills. All of the members of the quintet were from Chicago's South Side. McKnight and Williams attended Hyde Park High School, Randolph went to Corpus Christi, Palm attended Phillips, and Buckley studied at St. Elizabeth.

The Pastels were adept at imitating the styles of other popular groups as well as creating their own. Their repertoire spanned R&B, blues and pop tunes; these included "Moonlight In Vermont" and "September Song". Norman Palm recalls that the Pastels rehearsed an R&B-styled version of "Over The Rainbow" long before the Moroccos did theirs.

Miss Leona Lee was auditioning several groups at a Chicago recreation center when she heard the Pastels, and took over their management. She was responsible for bringing them to Leonard Allen and United Records, a Chicago-based independent label which had previously scored with "Mary Jo", a huge smash for the Four Blazes in 1952. At the Pastels' first session, in October 1955, they recorded two songs which were never released - "Bye Bye" and "Goodbye".

They returned to the studio about a month later. A tune entitled "Boom De De Boom" had been brought in from New York for the El Dorados to record, but since they were out of town at the time, the Pastels ended up recording it first. The side was played on WHFC-Chicago, but then listeners wrote in to request the flip be played, too. "Put Your Arms Around Me" became popular as well.

The record's main value to the group was that it helped them get engagements to perform. During this period, The Pastels appeared at Barbara's Playhouse, in Gary, Indiana, as well as a number of establishments in Chicago - the Club Delisa, the Cotton Club, the Casino, and the Trianon. At Park City, on 63rd Street and South Parkway, the Pastels did a show with the Clovers and the Drifters.



fame and connections it was not a good move. He didn't really have time to do the job, so they switched to Marvin Herman.

As they continued to work the dance circuit, their material was mostly their own - although they borrowed some from The Dells, Five Keys, Velours and Penguins.

For a recording contract, they reached back to their Fort Green roots - specifically, Kurtis' time occasionally singing with The Chips, when he had met Don Carter, owner of Pet Records. Through that connection the group got an audition, which led to what became their sole release: ANGEL OF LOVE/CAUSE I LOVE YOU - Pet 807.

Despite the mediocre production (most evident at the end of ANGEL OF LOVE, when both the voices and instruments need tightening), it was a good straightforward New York sound. Butch does lead on both the ballad side (ANGEL) and the uptempo flip, while Kurtis does the stuttering bass riffs on ANGEL. CAUSE I LOVE YOU, in particular, has classic elements: "I-love-you-yes-I-do" lyrics, a Jimmy Wright-style sax interlude, the rhythmic lead, the introductory nonsense syllables, etc. - everything that the oversimplified term "doo-wop" implies. It's clearly the product of a group which was immersed in the music of its era, the Bobby Robinson/George Goldner sound, and in fact it has more than a

slight resemblance to The Teenagers' I PROMISE TO REMEMBER.

In any case, with a record out The Capitols found themselves more in demand for personal appearances. They stepped up their dance schedule, appearing on bills with The Heartbeats, and played both a Jocko show and a Dr. Jive show at The Apollo.

This did not mean, however, that they stopped their involvement with other Fort Green groups. Clarence sang with Little Anthony's Chesters, and in fact, eventually left to join them. Kurtis also sang with them for a spell, until Nate Rodgers joined. Butch had sung with The Chips at the same time as Kurtis, who had also done fill-in work for The Revalons (another Pet group), The Tokens (of DOOM-LANG fame) and The Five Discs. Eddie Jacobs also sang with The Pearls.

All this helped to take its toll as did the lack of recording success, and within a couple of years The Capitols had broken up. Eddie's mother, for instance, wanted him to go out and get a real job. Kurtis stayed in the business however, and recorded several solos in the 60's. The best of these was EMPEROR OF MY BABY'S HEART around 1962, as Kurt Harris. He gave up recording in 1970, but has appeared in several movies ("Serpico", "Panic In Needle Park" and "The French Connection") as well as an off-Broadway production.

## The King Toppers

By Dave Hinckley, based on interviews with Louis Day and Grant Kitchings by Marv Goldberg and Marcia Vance.

All right now, quick. Everyone who can sing a verse form a King Toppers' record raise their hands.

You can't, can you? In fact, if it weren't for this piece of research here, you probably would go through your entire life knowing next to nothing about the King Toppers. So pay attention.

The King Toppers were one of the many obscure groups which Josie Records was fond of signing in the mid-50s.

They formed in 1954 at Dunbar High School in their native Dayton, Ohio. By the end of the year they were calling themselves the Corvettes, after the snappy new sports car which had just been introduced.

The Corvettes included Grant Kitchings (lead), Welton Young (lead and guitar), Dave Colter (tenor), Don Turner (baritone), and Louis Day (bass). Like a number of other young groups at the time, they experimented a lot with modern harmony, featuring pop and progressive jazz arrangements. Like those other groups, they were told by record companies that such material just didn't sell.

They appeared in Dayton and other nearby Ohio cities for two years, until a friend told them about New York's Apollo and its talent shows. So they hit the road for the Big Town and began hooking up with a succession of managers: Tom Watson, Cornelius Rogers and Aaron 'Tex' Cornelius. 'Tex' was a former member of the Regals and the Vee Jay Orioles, but he was no longer singing with them at this point. Rogers was the one who renamed them the King Toppers.

They auditioned at RCA, recording one song, but it was never issued. Eventually they filtered over to Josie, where around September of 1956 they recorded 811, **Walkin' And Talkin' the Blues/You Were Waiting For Me**. These sides were released early the next year, by which time Day had been drafted and Colter had left, replaced by Tex Cornelius.

Having little success with either "commercial" or modern harmony material, the group decided to sing what it pleased - modern harmony - which it did until its breakup not too long after.

As far as can be determined, only Kitchings had a subsequent career. This was his only brush with fame, thanks to the groups he chose: he and Tex joined Sonny Til's Orioles for a few months, then in 1958 he sang with the remnants of the Ravens (Joe Van Loan, David 'Boots' Bowers and Frank Todd). That Ravens group performed at the Apollo and did a 1958 Christmas show at the Regal.

By 1961 Kitchings was with a Keynotes group which also included David Baughan, Bill Brown and Bill Wells (formerly of the Drifters, Dominoes and Four Tunes, respectively). They were set to record for Capitol when Kitchings was drafted. Upon his discharge, he sang with a series of Ink Spots groups until 1971, when he replaced Don Thomas in the Johnny Moore Drifters. He remained with that group until 1975.

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## ADDITIONS & CORRECTIONS

We are always sad to report the death of a singer. It therefore makes us very happy to report that The Cardinals' lead, Ernie Warren, is alive and well, in spite of what we'd written in issue number 11.

We also seem to have invented an Empires' recording (thanks to the Mercury catalog, which needs work). Mercury 70747 is not by The Empires, but by the Prestos.

The date of The Ramblers MGM 55006 should be 3-55.

The Olympics Titan 1801 ("Western Movies") should read Demon 1801 (1960). The flip still eludes us, as does the flip of "Western Movies" on Liberty 54514 (1963).

We mentioned that The Cap Tans' "Crazy Bout My Honey Dip" was recorded by The Saigons as "Honey Gee". It was also recorded by The Sparrows (on Jay Dee) as "Hey".

We reported that The Blenders' manager got them a recording contract with MGM. In fact, MGM's records show that all sides were purchased from Joe Davis, for whom the group presumably recorded them in the same manner as The Crickets.

Most of the above info comes from (of course) Ferdie Gonzalez.

# The Sandmen

By Marv Goldberg and Rick Whitesell, based on interviews with Adriel McDonald, conducted by Marv Goldberg, and interviews with Bill Cook, conducted by Rick Whitesell.)

When Adriel McDonald left the Ink Spots in 1953, he realized quickly that he missed singing as part of a group, and he put out feelers to form a new harmonizing team.

At some point in 1954, McDonald got the Sandmen together. All of the other members were former spiritual singers who had switched to secular music: Benjamin Peay was lead; Walter Springer sang second tenor; Thurman Haynes was the baritone; and McDonald was the bass.

Since McDonald had been represented by the Moe Gale Agency when he sang with the Ink Spots, he decided to take his new group there as well. The Sandmen auditioned for Gale, and also for Roy Hamilton, a rising young star, and his manager Bill Cook - both of whom happened to be at the Agency at the time. (Bill Cook, a New Jersey disc-jockey, should be remembered by collectors for having recorded with the Marshall Brothers on Savoy.)

Cook was wildly enthusiastic about the Sandmen, particularly their lead vocalist. Of Benjamin Peay, he recalled: "In the music business, I've had the honor to work with and for many of the great names in entertainment; Roy (Hamilton), of course, was the one I believed in and worked hardest for...but when I first heard (Peay), I knew he had the talent it takes to be a truly sensational star." As other black artists, such as Screamin' Jay Hawkins, will testify, Bill Cook made it his policy to lend a hand whenever possible. Besides being a pioneer among black disc-jockeys, Cook also had the unusual (at least in the music industry) reputation of being honest and direct in his dealings. And as soon as he heard the Sandmen,

he went to work for them. A proposed tour as back-up group to Savannah Churchill fell through, but Cook did bring them to the attention of arranger Quincy Jones and A&R man Marv Halseman, who were working for Columbia's Okeh subsidiary at that time. Both of these gentlemen were impressed, and a recording session was arranged.

On December 14, 1954, the Sandmen recorded the Rodgers & Hammerstein tune "When I Grow Too Old to Dream", a Bill Cook composition entitled "Somebody To Love", and "I Could Have Told You" (a Frank Sinatra song which Columbia never released).

The appearance of their initial waxing brought them a few engagements in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They also returned to the studio to sing behind Chuck Willis on "I Can Tell" and with Lincoln Chase on "Did You Get My Message" on Columbia. (The latter record was a Mitch Miller disc, featuring Lincoln Chase as lead vocalist. Chase, although a competent singer in his own right, is best remembered for having penned the LaVern Baker smash, "Jim Dandy.")

Okeh, more interested in Benny Peay as a soloist than a group member, gave the Sandmen a false ray of hope in late May of 1955. Although Okeh hadn't promoted the first record, the label brought the group to the studio to record "Ooh", "I Was Fool Enough To Love You", and "Bring Me Love". Then, just a week later, Benjamin Peay was brought back to the studio (minus the unaware Sandmen) to record "The Kentuckian Song", the theme from the Burt Lancaster movie, "The Kentuckian". (The Hilltoppers later covered this tune, too.)

When "The Kentuckian Song" was released on record, Benny Peay had disappeared forever, having been magically changed into "Brook Benton" (probably by Marv Halseman). "Ooh" was used as the flip side, but was credited to "Brook Benton and the Sandmen". Since Okeh had carried out all these fateful machinations without bothering to let the Sandmen know about them, the disillusioned group disbanded.

Brook Benton, of course, went on to become a major star. Adriel McDonald has appeared since then with a succession of Ink Spots groups. Walter Springer has been in some of them.

## THE SANDMEN

### OKEH

- 7052 Somebody To Love/When I Grow Too Old To Dream 2-55  
7055 I Can Tell (Chuck Willis &)/(One More Break - C. Willis) 5-55  
7058 Ooh (Brook Benton &)/(The Kentuckian Song - B. Benton) 6-55

Unreleased: I Could Have Told You; I Was Fool Enough To Love You; Bring Me Love.

All leads by Brook Benton (Benjamin Peay), except 7055.

### COLUMBIA (Lincoln Chase & The Sandmen)

- 40475 The Message/That's All I Need 4-55  
(All Columbia sides recorded 2-4-55)

Unreleased: I'm Sure; Things Money Can't Buy.

# The Pipes

By Rick Whitesell, Based on an interview with Louis Candys conducted by Marv Goldberg

Oakland's McClymonds High School was where the "prototype Pipes" group was formed, around 1953. Billing themselves as The Cool Notes, Louis Candys (lead tenor), Irving Swanigan (lead), Harold Foreman (tenor), Huey Roundtree (lead and baritone), Leevern Ball (bass) and Ed Kelly (piano) had all had previous musical experience in the school choir and in church.

Irving Swanigan dropped out after the group had been singing together for a year or so. After tightening up the act, the remaining Cool Notes began making expeditions to Los Angeles in search of an interested record label. They found several - Capitol, Imperial, Modern and Specialty - but were told that they were too young. After graduating from high school, they visited Dootsie Williams at Dootone. Williams felt the group was not only talented, but old enough to appear on his label - which they subsequently did.

At this time, the group also took a shorter name for themselves. From the lyric in DANNY BOY ("the pipes, the pipes are calling...") came their new name: The Pipes.

The Pipes' music had a mellow, soulful quality, due in large part to the fact that they practiced singing Swallows and Clyde McPhatter-

led group ballads. Wisely deciding that they wouldn't attract any attention sounding like someone else, however, The Pipes retained their own sound throughout their career. All the tunes they recorded were their own original compositions.

BE FAIR and LET ME GIVE YOU MONEY, the two sides used on The Pipes' first Dootone release were recorded at the group's first session. Recording was done in a garage; Louis Candys recalls that in singing lead, he had to stand on a box to reach the microphone - and he worried through the whole session that he'd fall off!

Although BE FAIR did well locally, The Pipes received only a few dollars (and no songwriting royalties) for their effort. Most of the money was lavished on "sessions and traveling". Like so many other groups of the era, the bulk of The Pipes' income came from personal appearances. Their gigs never took them outside the state of California, as they played in Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Fresno, San Francisco, and Oakland.

The Pipes' next session, in which the group was again accompanied by Ernie (IN THE MOOD) Freeman's Orchestra, produced YOU ARE AN ANGEL, and I LOVE THE LIFE I LIVE. Louis Candys feels that, musically, YOU ARE AN ANGEL was "too advanced for the time." Whatever the case, Dootone didn't push the release and it went nowhere.

The Pipes had been with Dootone for about a year when they decided that their plans to be full-time singers were impractical, and they contented themselves with occasional weekend gigs. Around 1958, the group invested in a recording session and released SO LONG on their own Jacy label. Only a few hundred copies were pressed and it remains an obscure record.

A 1959 return to Dootsie Williams resulted in another recording session, but the sides were never released. This disillusionment led to the disbanding of The Pipes, as the members abandoned





**The Pipes (1956):** Huey Roundtree, Louis Candys, Leevern Ball, Harold Foreman.

professional-singing for good.

The members of The Pipes are good friends even today, though. Louis Candys is a minister, Leevern Ball is an account representative for Kraft Foods, Harold Foreman is an aquatics specialist for a recreation program, and Huey Roundtree is president of a mail-order record company. And the records made by these gentlemen as a group are now coveted collectors' items.

### THE PIPES

#### DOOTONE

388	Be Fair (LC/HR)	1956
	Let Me Give You Money (HR)	
0401	You Are an Angel (LC/HR)	1956
	I Love the Life I Live (HR)	

#### JACY

001	So Long (LC)	CA. 1958
	Baby Please Don't Go (LC)	

#### LEADS:

LC - Louise Candys; HR - Huey Roundtree

# The Kool Gents

By Dave Hinckley, based on an interview with John Carter by Marv Goldberg

They started out as The Golden Tones, which was really the only name of their own they ever had, and the only real success which touched them came when their lead singer left for a solo career.

Still, the descendants of that group best known as the Kool Gents are still singing today, 27 years after the Golden Tones got together - and in the rhythm and blues business, that isn't a bad record.

In 1951, at Chicago's Marshall High School, the original quintet got together: Cicero Blake (lead), James Harper (first tenor and baritone), Howard McClain (second tenor), Teddy Long (second tenor and baritone), and John Carter (bass).

That was not, at first, a very stable lineup. By 1953, Blake, Harper and McClain had been replaced, respectively, by Delecta 'Dee' Clark (lead), Doug Brown (second tenor), and John McCall (first tenor). This new group, however, stayed intact rather well.

In the early days they practiced both secular (rhythm and blues) and gospel material. Their prime inspirations were the Highway QCs, the 5 Royales and the Clovers.

Dee Clark was the experienced member of the group. In 1952, as one of the Hambone Kids (other members: Sammy McGrier and Ronny Strong), he had recorded **Hambone** (Okeh 6862 - label credits the Red Saunders Orchestra). Some of the lyrics from that song reportedly influenced Bo Diddley's **Bo Diddley**.

Clark took to hanging around the studios of WGS, which was the Golden Tones' neighborhood. There he met disc jockey Herb Kent,

who called himself "The Cool Gent". Eventually he took the whole group in to meet Kent, and they asked the DJ for a couple of favors: first, would he be their manager, and second, could they use the name Kool Gents. Kent turned down the first request - not enough time - but had no objections to the second.

In addition, Kent got them an audition with Vee Jay records. After singing for Vivian Carter, her husband Jimmy Bracken and her brother Calvin (VJ's A&R man), they were signed to a contract.

They did not record immediately, but went back to rehearse material they had written. When they returned it was polished enough so Calvin approved and Vee Jay bandleader Al Smith started work on the arrangements. Their first session was at Universal Recording Studios.

Most of the group's appearances were dates arranged by Vee Jay's promotion department. They played mostly in the Chicago area, with longer field trips to Gary, Indiana and Ypsilanti, Michigan.

In 1956 Vee Jay bought out Ping Records and soon got an idea for one of its favorite tricks: a cover record. Only Vee Jay didn't cover a black artist's record with a white artist. Vee Jay covered an obscure black artist's record with a better known black artist - which Vee Jay also felt could do a better job.

In this case the Ping record was **Mother's Son**, recorded by the Debonairs. Vee Jay had the Kool Gents record it, and was pleased by their version. However, it was so much unlike the standard Kool Gents sound that Vee Jay called them the Delegates - a name they used previously for **The Convention**, an election-year novelty record which also featured the voices of Calvin Carter and Ewart Abner.

Despite this dual recording identity, the group always called itself the Kool Gents, never the Delegates, in personal appearances.

Although Vee Jay had the whole group under contract, Ewart Abner wanted Dee Clark to leave and record solo. He finally convinced Dee, but there remained one problem: he hadn't let the rest of the group know about it.

They were, understandably, annoyed. Roaring mad, in fact. To soothe them, Vee Jay explained that this actually would help them. As the Kool Gents, Vee Jay said frankly, they had a limited future. But it just so happened that the El Dorados were breaking up, and if another group were to merely slip on that name, well, that group could step into some money.

The Kool Gents agreed - without a lead singer of their own, they didn't really have a lot of choice - and they did appear at the Apollo, Howard and Regal theaters, among other places. They never did make big money, but it helped them survive. (See accompanying article on the El Dorados.)

Dee Clark, meanwhile, had definitely made the right decision. With a voice which could be as frenetic as Little Richard's and could soar higher than Clyde McPhatter's, he was quite successful as a solo artist.



**The Kool Gents (1956):** Top: Dee Clark; Bottom: John McCall, John Carter, a fan, Teddy Long, Doug Brown.

Although his big hit **Raindrops** was on Vee Jay, he began on Falcon, a Vee Jay subsidiary, with No. 1005, **24 Boy Friends/Seven Nights**.

Although several old Kool Gents' recordings were released with only Clark's name on the label, he never recorded with the group again. (Abner 1037, **At My Front Door**, was by another group.)

The Kool Gents lasted for a while as the El Dorados, then broke up. So John Carter formed another Kool Gents group, which lasted until about 1965. This group, which made no recordings, included John McCall (lead); Danny 'Blinky' Edwards (first tenor); Eugene 'Huffy' Huff (second tenor and baritone); and Carter (bass). The Kool Gents' record on Bethlehem was not by this group, nor any

other which Carter was associated with.

By 1971 Carter and Eugene Huff had decided to change course again and formed another El Dorados group. This is the one seen at several oldies revival shows, and included Lee Toussaint (lead); Spencer Goosby Jr. (first tenor); and Willie Williams (guitar). They cut two records for the Paula label.

Carter still has an El Dorados group today. It includes Carter, Huff, Goosby and Goosby's brothers Robert (lead) and William (second tenor).

### THE KOOL GENTS

#### VEE JAY

173	This Is The Night (JM)/Do Ya Do (TL)	1955
207	You Know (JM)/I Just Can't Help Myself (JM/DC)	1956
<b>(as The Delegates)</b>		
212	The Convention(ally)/Jay's Rock - Big Jay McNeely)	1956
243	Mother's Son (DC)/I'm Gonna Be Glad (JM)	1957
<b>(with only Dee Clark's name on label)</b>		
355	Gloria/(You're Lookin' Good - Clark solo)	7-60
<b>On Dee Clark albums:</b>		
Kangaroo Hop		
Just Like A Fool		

### THE EL DORADOS

#### PAULA

347	Since You Came Into My Life (EH/LT) / Looking In From The Outside (EH/LT)	1971
369	Loose Bootie (JC) / (Loose Bootie - Instrumental)	1972

#### LEADS:

JM - John McCall; TL - Teddy Long; DC - Dee Clark; EH - Eugene Huff, LT - Lee Toussaint, JC - John Carter.

# The Chanters

by Marv Goldberg, Based on an interview with Fred Paige

The Chanters belonged to the "kid-sound" school of Rock 'n' Roll, which went back to the Mellow-Moods and which was, at the time The Chanters formed, riding high because of Frankie Lyman and The Teenagers. Once The Teenagers' sound took off, innumerable groups rushed to copy it. Most were dismal failures; some, like The Chanters, made serious contributions to the music.

The Chanters formed in late 1957 out of a group of friends in Queens, New York. This locale was far removed from the R 'n' B centers in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, and allowed for more original sounds from groups like The Rivileers, Clefones and Videos.

The two oldest members of The Chanters, Fred Paige (first and second tenor) and Bud Johnson (second and first tenor) were in high school; the others - Larry Pendergrass (lead), Elliot Green (baritone) and Bobby Thompson (bass) - were in junior high.

Paige, Thompson and Johnson first started singing together informally, until Bud's father, saxman and bandleader Bud Johnson, Senior, talked them into forming a full group. He even got them their audition with King Records (parent company of DeLuxe). Incidentally, when a record says "Bud Johnson and The Chanters", it is the elder Johnson referred to; Bud, Junior, never sang lead. To keep it even more in the family, Bud's mother, Bernice was the group's manager.

They picked the name "Chanters" out of a dictionary and began to rehearse "kid-sound" songs in earnest. They also practiced, at various times, songs by The Heartbeats, Videos and Imperials.

Finally Bud's father took them to see Andy Gibson, DeLuxe's A&R man, who had the group signed and who produced the sessions. Bud, Senior was the bandleader on most of the sessions.

The relative obscurity of The Chanters was due to the fact that their parents felt they were too young to be performers. They appeared only in the New York area and even then, not at any theaters or clubs. There was supposed to be a tour, but their well-meaning parents killed that too.

At the same time they were The Chanters, they did background vocals for a progressive jazz album. For the session they added another voice - that of tenor Stevie Garner - and called themselves The Voices Six. Fred isn't sure if the album was ever released.

Because of their parents' unwillingness to let the group travel, they became almost inactive and Fred left to go into the service. He

was replaced by Freddy Johnson, Bud's cousin, who can be heard as lead on FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS. For this record the group used the name "Voices Five." Soon after, Stevie Garner was added as a permanent sixth member.

In the early 60's, mainly due to N.Y. DJ "Swingin' Slim" Rose, The Chanters enjoyed a resurgence of airplay. This prompted DeLuxe to re-release some of the group's records, including some previously unreleased sides. In spite of this, the group disbanded about this time, possibly never cashing in at all at the birth of the oldies craze.

In the late 60's, Bud Johnson and Stevie Garner produced HEAVENLY YOU, by a Chanters' group on SSP. Fred doesn't know anything about the group, however, even if Bud and Stevie sang in it.

In 1966, Fred sang with The Del-Vons - Ben Monroe (lead), Earl Price (first tenor), Mickey Paige (second tenor), Ray Jackson (baritone), and George Fuller (guitar). They had one record on the Wells label.

Currently, Fred is a vocalist for a band, "Pages Of History", which by the time you read this, should have had its first release - SMOKIN' AT THE DISCO - on the Saturn label.

Disco has now replaced kid-sound. But Fred remembers, and so do we - MY MY DARLING, AT MY FRONT DOOR, FIVE LITTLE KISSES - by The Chanters, the best kid-sound around.



The Chanters (1958): Top: Bobby Thompson, Elliot Green. Bottom: Fred Paige, Bud Johnson, Larry Pendergrass.

### THE CHANTERS

#### DELUXE

6162	My My Darling (LP)	1958
	I Need Your Tenderness (LP)	
6166	Row Your Boat (LP)	1958
	Stars In The Skies (LP)	
6172	Five Little Kisses (LP)	1958
	Angel Darling (FP)	
6177	No, No, No (LP)	1958
	Over The Rainbow (LP)	
6191	I Make This Pledge (LP)	1961
	No, No, No	
6194	At My Door (LP)	1961
	My My Darling	
6200	Row Your Boat	1963
	No, No, No	

#### CRAFT (as VOICES FIVE)

116	For Sentimental Reasons (FJ)	1959
	All Alone (?)	

#### SSP

Heavenly You	Late '60s
What Are You Doing	
(No record number on label)	

#### LEADS:

LP - Larry Pendergrass; FP - Fred Paige; FJ - Freddy Johnson.

### THE DEL-VONS

#### WELLS

1001	All I Did Was Cry (FP)	1966
	Gone Forever (BM)	

#### LEADS:

FP - Fred Paige; BM - Ben Monroe.